# Where are main US military bases in ME?

FOLLOWING are the significant military bases in the Middle East. Iran has threatened to strike US bases in the region if attacked by Washington, after US President Donald Trump told Iranians to keep protesting and declared "help is on the way".

**Bahrain**

Home to the headquarters of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, whose area of responsibility includes the Gulf, Red Sea, Arabian Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean.

**Qatar**

The 24-hectare (59-acre) Al Udeid Air Base, in the desert outside the capital Doha, is the forward headquarters for US Central Command, which directs US military operations in a huge swathe of territory stretching from Egypt in the west to Kazakhstan in the east. The Middle East's largest US base houses around 10,000 troops.

US Central Command said in January that it and regional partners had opened a new coordination cell (MEAD-CDOC) at Al Udeid to enhance integrated air and missile defence. The new cell would improve how regional forces coordinate and share air and missile responsibilities across the Middle East, it said.

**Kuwait**

Several sprawling military installations include Camp Arifjan, the forward headquarters of US Army Central and the Ali Al Salem Air Base, roughly 40 km (25 miles) from the Iraqi border and known as "The Rock" for its isolated, rugged environment. Camp Buehring was established during the 2003 Iraq War and is a staging post for US Army units deploying into Iraq and Syria, according to the US Army website.

**United Arab Emirates**

The Al Dhafra Air Base, situated south of the UAE capital Abu Dhabi and shared with the UAE Air Force, is a critical US Air Force hub that has supported key missions against the militant Islamic State group, as well as reconnaissance deployments across the region, according to the US Air Force Central Command.

Dubai's Jebel Ali Port, while not a formal military base, is the US Navy's largest port of call in the Middle East and regularly hosts US aircraft carriers and other vessels.

**Iraq**

The US maintains a presence at Ain Al Asad Air Base in western Anbar province, supporting Iraqi security forces and contributing to the Nato mission, according to the White House. Iranian missile strikes targeted the base in 2020, in retaliation for the US killing of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani.

Situated in the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region of northern Iraq, Erbil Air Base serves as a hub for US and coalition forces conducting training exercises and battle drills. The base supports US military efforts by providing a secure location for training, intelligence sharing, and logistical coordination in northern Iraq, according to a 2024 Library of Congress report.

**Saudi Arabia**

US soldiers in Saudi Arabia — who numbered 2,321 in 2024 according to a White House letter — operate in coordination with the Saudi government, providing air and missile defence capabilities and supporting the operation of US military aircraft.

Some are stationed roughly 60 km south of Riyadh, at Prince Sultan Air Base, which supports US Army air defence assets including Patriot missile batteries and Terminal High Altitude Area Defence systems.

**Jordan**

Located in Azraq, 100 km northeast of the capital Amman, the Muwaffaq al Salti Air Base hosts the US Air Forces Central's 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, which engages in missions across the Levant, according to the Library of Congress.

**Turkiye**

Turkiye and the US jointly run the Incirlik Air Base in the southern Adana province. It hosts US nuclear warheads and has been used to support the international coalition fighting IS in Syria and Iraq. It is also home to 1,465 members of the US military stationed in Turkiye. —Reuters

# Number of migrants dying in ICE detention rising under Trump

NEW YORK: The confrontation tactics used by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have been in the spotlight since the fatal shooting of protester Renee Nicole Good in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on January 7.

But data released by the agency shows that immigration detention centers can also be deadly environments for those being held in them.

Press releases from ICE reveal that a number of people have died in custody in the just first few days of 2026 — immediately following a year when migrant detainee deaths reached a 20-year high and the number of ICE detentions increased exponentially.

More than 68,000 adults were in ICE detention as of the end of December, up from about 36,000 in December 2023, agency data shows.

**Deaths in 2026 so far**

At least four people have died while being detained by ICE in 2026, according to the agency.

The deaths all occurred in the first 10 days of the year, with three deaths announced in the period from January 9-10.

The migrants, all men, were aged from 42 to 68 years old. Two were nationals of Honduras, one was a Cuban, and the fourth man was a Cambodian.

The deaths of two of the men were attributed to "heart-related health issues," with the other two causes of death not clearly indicated.

Only one of the latter cases was listed as "under investigation."

**A record number in 2025**

The previous year, 2025, was already the deadliest year for ICE detainees in two decades.

At least 30 people died while being held in immigration detention centers -- the highest death toll since 2004, the year after the agency was created.

The 2025 figure represents more than the total number of deaths recorded in ICE custody during the entire Biden administration (2021-2025).

In those four years, 26 people died in while in ICE detention, according to data compiled by the American Immigration Lawyers Association from ICE reports.

**Lack of appropriate care**

External observers have raised concerns over the level of medical treatment that detainees receive.

A 2024 report from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) concluded that up to 95 percent of deaths in ICE detention could have been prevented with appropriate care.

The report analyzed deaths in ICE custody between 2017 and 2021 by studying thousands of pages of documents obtained through public records requests.

Medical experts who reviewed these documents found widespread evidence of incorrect or inappropriate treatment as well as severely delayed medical care.—AFP

# Scientist wins award for shedding light on hidden fungal networks

WASHINGTON: Beneath the surface of forests, grasslands and farms across the world, vast fungal webs form underground trading systems to exchange nutrients with plant roots, acting as critical climate regulators as they draw down 13 billion tons of carbon annually.

Yet until recently, these "mycorrhizal networks" were greatly underestimated: seen as merely helpful companions to plants rather than one of Earth's vital circulatory systems.

American evolutionary biologist Toby Kiers has now been awarded the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement — sometimes called the "Nobel for the environment" — for her work bringing this underground world into focus.

By charting the global distribution of mycorrhizal fungi in a worldwide Underground Atlas launched last year, Kiers and her colleagues have helped illuminate below-ground biodiversity - insights that can guide conservation efforts to protect these vast carbon stores.

Plants send their excess carbon below ground where mycorrhizal fungi draw down 13.12 billion tons of carbon dioxide — around a third of total emissions from fossil fuels.

"I just think about all the ways that soil is used in a negative way — you know, terms like 'dirtbag,'" the 49-year-old University Research Chair at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam said. "Whereas a bag of dirt contains a galaxy!"

Kiers began studying fungi at 19, after writing a grant proposal that won her a place on a scientific expedition to Panama's rainforests, "and I started asking questions about what was happening under these massive trees in this very diverse jungle."

She still vividly recalls the first time she peered through a microscope and saw an arbuscule — the mycorrhizal fungi's tiny tree-like structure that penetrates plant cells and serves as the site of nutrient exchange — which she described as "so beautiful."—AFP

DENMARK's Foreign Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen (centre) and Greenland's Foreign Minister Vivian Motzfeldt (left) arrive at the White House to meet US Vice President J.D. Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio.—Reuters

# Danish FM says Trump undeterred in quest for Greenland after meeting

WASHINGTON: A meeting on Wednesday between top US officials and the foreign ministers of Denmark and Greenland appeared to do little to quell President Donald Trump's ambition of taking over Greenland, raising the prospect of prolonged geopolitical tension between Copenhagen and Washington.

Following the White House meeting between Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen, his Greenlandic counterpart Vivian Motzfeldt, US Vice President J. D. Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Rasmussen said the US and Denmark would form a working group to discuss a broad array of concerns regarding the Danish overseas territory.

But he also made it clear that Washington had not budged on its position that it must acquire Greenland, an outcome Rasmussen and Motzfeldt described as an unacceptable breach of sovereignty.

"We didn't manage to change the American position," Rasmussen told reporters outside the Danish embassy in Washington after the meeting concluded.

"It's clear that the president has this wish of conquering Greenland."

Trump has repeatedly said in recent weeks that the strategically located and mineral-rich island is vital to US security, and the United States must own it to prevent Russia or China from occupying it. He has said all options are on the table for securing the territory, rhetoric that has caused turmoil within the Nato alliance.

**Not for sale**

Before the meeting, which lasted two hours, Trump argued on social media that Nato would become far more formidable and effective with Greenland in the hands of the US. "Anything less than that is unacceptable," he wrote.

In a follow-up post citing Russia and China, the president wrote: "NATO: Tell Denmark to get them out of here, NOW! Two dogsleds wont do it! Only the USA can!!!" Greenland and Denmark say the island is not for sale, and that threats of force are reckless and security concerns should be resolved among allies.

Prominent EU countries have backed Denmark, which is a member of Nato. Ahead of the meeting, Greenland and Denmark said they had begun to increase their military presence in and around Greenland in close cooperation with Nato.

The increased military presence would include a range of exercises throughout the year, according to the Danish defence ministry.—Reuters

# Punjab govt will buy only electric or hybrid cars

**Continued from Page 1**

S&GAD would then issue a formal notification to launch the new policy.

**'Combating smog'**

During a meeting with American business leaders, Senior Punjab Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said the provincial government would now purchase only hybrid and electric vehicles as part of its smog mitigation measures.

"The government has decided to replace petrol vehicles in the official fleet with hybrid and electric vehicles," she said.

According to a statement, the US delegation was given a comprehensive briefing on Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's vision and policy initiatives. It added that the American business leaders commended CM Maryam's governance reforms and environmental policies.

They were informed about the provincial government's policies and enforcement measures related to the shift towards electric and hybrid transport, brick kiln mechanisation, e-transport, official use of super seeders, and other practical reforms.

"For the first time, sectoral-level anti-smog measures have been introduced in Lahore, with the Planning and Development Department designated as the central policy hub," Ms Aurangzeb said, adding that the city's air quality had shown marked improvement.

To combat smog, she said, 41 monitoring stations had been installed, with the number set to reach 100 by June. The minister added that surveillance was being carried out through drones and thermal cameras. "A Smog War Room is monitoring industries, brick kilns, and vehicles around the clock, while Punjab Climate Watch is fully operational."

The minister told the delegation that to control crop burning, 5,000 super seeders had been provided to farmers at a 60 per cent subsidy.

"A Nasa [US space agency] report has confirmed a 60 per cent reduction in smog levels.," she said.

She further said 1,000 e-buses had been added across Punjab, with a decision taken to procure an additional 10,000 this year.

# Pakistan on list as US suspends immigrant visas

**Continued from Page 1**

including family-based, employment-based, and diversity visas — are impacted.

"Immigrant visa processing from these 75 countries will be paused while the State Department reassesses immigration processing procedures to prevent the entry of foreign nationals who would take welfare and public benefits," Mr Piggott said.

The freeze is closely linked to the US public-charge rule, which assesses whether immigrants are likely to rely on government assistance. As part of the new measures, applicants from the affected countries will be required to post $15,000 bonds, while the average monthly income in these nations is $675, highlighting what critics have described as a wealth-based barrier disguised as public-charge screening.

In addition to the freeze, the State Department said in a tweet that it has revoked over 100,000 visas, including some 8,000 student visas and 2,500 specialized visas for individuals who had encounters with US law enforcement for criminal activity.

"We will continue to deport these thugs to keep America safe," the statement added, underscoring the administration's emphasis on security and criminal background checks.

Officials cited security and document verification failures as central to the visa freeze.

State Department data shows that 43pc of recent asylum fraud cases originated from these 75 countries, with 18,000 visas revoked since January 2025 alone. According to the administration, the measure is designed to compel foreign governments to "clean house" by policing extremists and preventing document fraud within their borders.

The policy is part of a broader shift under the Trump administration emphasizing merit-based immigration. Section 220 of the SMART Act introduces a points system for skilled workers, designed to increase legal immigration pathways while ensuring applicants meet economic and security standards.

**Impact on Pakistan**

For Pakistan, the freeze could temporarily disrupt education, employment, and family reunification plans. Thousands of prospective students, professionals, and families will face longer processing times and new financial requirements. Pakistani consulates in the US are expected to provide guidance in the coming days.

Visa suspensions and pauses have occurred in the past too, often during periods of administrative transition or in response to security concerns. However, the scale of this freeze — spanning 75 nations — is unprecedented, reflecting ongoing debates in Washington over immigration, national security, and public-benefit usage.

Officials have not specified when visa processing will resume, but have reassured that affected countries will be notified individually once the review and security reassessment are complete.

THE remains of an Ice Age grey wolf puppy discovered in permafrost near Tumat, a village in northeastern Siberia.—Reuters

# Scientists recover genome from woolly rhino eaten by Ice Age wolf

ABOUT 14,400 years ago, a weeks-old wolf puppy ate its last meal — meat from a woolly rhinoceros — shortly before dying on the harsh Ice Age landscape of northeastern Siberia.

In a first, researchers have extracted DNA and recovered the rhino's genome from a chunk of undigested meat from the stomach contents found in the puppy's remains, discovered in permafrost near the village of Tumat. These genome findings provided insight into the fate of this impressive cold-adapted horned herbivore species once common in northern Europe and Asia.

The researchers compared this rhino's genome to those of two other individuals from the same species that lived thousands of years earlier — about 18,000 and 49,000 years ago — to examine genetic changes over time. In doing so, they learned that the woolly rhinoceros as a species remained genetically healthy until the end of the Ice Age before apparently suffering a rapid population collapse, probably because the warming climate erased their preferred steppe-tundra environment.

For instance, the newly recovered genome showed no evidence of inbreeding suggestive of population decline. Other research has indicated that the woolly rhinoceros disappeared about 14,000 years ago, just a few hundred years after this individual lived.

"With this research we demonstrate that it is possible to recover a high-quality genome from poorly preserved material dating to a crucial time in the life history of a species," said evolutionary geneticist Solveig Gudjonsdottir, lead author of the study published on Wednesday in the journal *Genome Biology and Evolution*.

"It is a very cool achievement," said evolutionary geneticist and study co-senior author Love Daln of the Centre for Palaeogenetics, a collaboration between Stockholm University and the Swedish Museum of Natural History. The woolly rhinoceros, whose species name is Coelodonta antiquitatis, first appears in the fossil record about 600,000 years ago.

It became one of the many large mammals to go extinct around the end of the last Ice Age, along with such species as woolly mammoths, saber-toothed cats, mastodons and giant ground sloths, all of which faced ominous environmental changes as the climate warmed, as well as pressure from human hunting.

"The woolly rhinoceros was a large animal, reaching up to around 2 meters (7 feet) tall, and was covered in thick, long fur," said Gudjonsdottir, who worked on the study while a master's student at Stockholm University. "It had two horns, a large hump on its back, a stocky build and relatively short legs. The species was primarily a grazer, feeding on grass and low vegetation adapted to cold, dry environments," Gudjonsdottir added.—Reuters

# Hydrogen planes 'more for the 22nd century'

**PARIS: Hydrogen-powered airplanes, touted by some as a way to slash carbon emissions from flying, are unlikely to prove a viable technology anytime soon, the head of French engine maker Safran said on Wednesday.**

**"Hydrogen in aviation is more for the 22nd century," Olivier Andries told a French parliament committee. Pan-European planemaker Airbus has been working for years on putting a hydrogen plane into service in the 2040s, but acknowledged last year that progress had been slower than expected.**

**Burning hydrogen only produces water, which is why the aviation and automobile industries have looked at it as possibility to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from travel.**

**Safran, a major engine supplier to both Airbus and Boeing, already has engines that can be fuelled with hydrogen, Andries said. But liquid hydrogen, even at -253 degrees Celsius (-423 F), takes up four times as much space as kerosene, which is what planes use at present.**

**That makes it impossible to use with current plane designs, while requiring billions of euros of investment in hydrogen storage infrastructure at airports worldwide.**

**"You cannot only come up with ideas that are incompatible with today's ecosystem," Andries told lawmakers. He also cast doubt on calls to impose limits on flying to curb emissions, as the air transport sector aims to cut its 2005 pollution emission levels in half by 2050. More than five billion people travelled by plane last year, he said, and revenue for the global airline industry is already 20pc higher than pre-Covid levels.**

**"The trend is very strong, whether you like it or not," he said, citing as an example India's rapidly emerging middle class which "yearns to fly". —AFP**